

5 March 2025

FOI Ref 17642

Request - You asked us the following:

I would like to request under the Freedom of Information act, information held by you on group-based child sexual exploitation.

In particular, I would like to know what definition, if any, you use to identify group-based child sexual exploitation.

Have you a dedicated team investigating group-based child sexual exploitation? If so, how many officers, by rank, are involved in this team?

If there is no dedicated team, how do you investigate allegations of group-based child sexual exploitation?

I would like to know how many investigations into group-based child sexual exploitation you have carried out since 2000. I would like this figure broken down by year, if possible.

I would also like to know the number of suspects arrested as part of these investigations and the number subsequently charged. If possible I would like a breakdown of the age, sex and ethnicity of those arrested and charged.

I would also like to know the number of people convicted, again with a breakdown of the age, sex and ethnicity of those convicted.

I would appreciate it if the numerical data could be supplied in the form of an Excel spreadsheet or some other form of .CSV file.

We received your request on 09/01/2025 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Staffordshire Police's response to your enquiry is as follows:

Staffordshire Police holds some of the requested information.

- In particular, I would like to know what definition, if any, you use to identify group-based child sexual exploitation. – **Disclosed, In Staffordshire we use the national definition of group based offending. 'Two or more individuals (whether identified or not) who are known to (or associated with) one another and are known to be involved in the sexual exploitation of children and young people. This includes introducing them to other individuals for the purpose of exploitation, trafficking a child for the purpose of sexual exploitation, taking payment for sexual activities with a child or young person or allowing their property to be used for sexual activities with a child or young person'.**
- Have you a dedicated team investigating group-based child sexual exploitation? If so, how many officers, by rank, are involved in this team? – **Disclosed, the teams consists of x2 Detective Inspectors, x6 Detective Sergeants and x14 Detective Constable's.**

- If there is no dedicated team, how do you investigate allegations of group-based child sexual exploitation? – **Not applicable.**
- I would like to know how many investigations into group-based child sexual exploitation you have carried out since 2000. I would like this figure broken down by year, if possible. – **Partially disclosed, please see the accompanying file entitled 'FOI 17642 Group-based Child Sexual Exploitation Data'.**

On 20th May 2020 Staffordshire Police implemented a new case management system. This system brought data from a number of legacy systems into one to provide a single nominal record, including the custody system. Therefore, data is only held from 20th May 2020.

Please be advised this data pertains to where the child sexual exploitation qualifier has been applied and then a manual trawl has been completed to determine if the occurrence was group based .

- I would also like to know the number of suspects arrested as part of these investigations and the number subsequently charged. If possible I would like a breakdown of the age, sex and ethnicity of those arrested and charged. – **Partially disclosed, please see the accompanying file entitled 'FOI 17642 Group-based Child Sexual Exploitation Data'.**

On 20th May 2020 Staffordshire Police implemented a new case management system. This system brought data from a number of legacy systems into one to provide a single nominal record, including the custody system. Therefore, data is only held from 20th May 2020.

Please be advised this data pertains to where a child sexual exploitation qualifier has been applied and then a manual trawl has been completed to determine if the occurrence was group based and where the outcome had recorded as a charge.

- I would also like to know the number of people convicted, again with a breakdown of the age, sex and ethnicity of those convicted. – **No information held, please see section 16.**
- I would appreciate it if the numerical data could be supplied in the form of an Excel spreadsheet or some other form of .CSV file. – **Disclosed, please see the accompanying file entitled 'FOI 17642 Group-based Child Sexual Exploitation Data'.**

Please note that there are several offences that have been removed from the data set as they are still being investigated so with regard to these cases we are citing Section 30(3) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Investigations conducted by Public Authorities.

The following exemptions have been applied:

In accordance with Section 17(1) of the Freedom of Information Act, this letter represents a refusal notice for this particular request.

Staffordshire Police can neither confirm nor deny that any further information relevant to this request is held, as the duty in Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 does not apply by virtue of the following exemptions:

- Section 23(5) – Information supplied by, or concerning certain security bodies

Section 23 is an absolute class-based exemption and as such does not require the application of a Public Interest Test.

- Section 31 (3) - Law Enforcement.

(3) The duty to confirm or deny does not arise if, or to the extent that, compliance with section 1(1)(a) would, or would be likely to, prejudice any of the matters mentioned in subsection (1).

- Section 30(3) – Criminal Investigations

Section 30 is qualified and class-based and, as such, we are required to apply the public interest test.

Harm:

Child Sexual Exploitation is the illegal exploitation of people for personal or commercial gain. It covers a wide range of abuse and exploitation, domestic servitude, and criminal exploitation, and includes the illegal trafficking of humans.

A wide range of investigative methods are deployed by police to bring the perpetrators of Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking activity to justice, and where disclosure of information including, in some cases, confirming or denying information is held would risk prejudice to any such investigations it should not be given.

To confirm or deny that any other information is held in respect of ongoing covert investigations would risk revealing to criminal gangs, police intelligence and the focus of covert investigative activity. To confirm any other information was held would mean ongoing covert investigations would be compromised as it would give offenders awareness of police activity which would enable steps to be taken by them to alter their behaviour and/or destroy evidence. Conversely, to confirm no other information was held would alert criminals to the fact they were not the focus of any police investigation and as such would allow them to continue offending without fear of reprisal or apprehension. This may even lead to an escalation of offending.

In addition, to confirm or deny whether information is held in this case has the potential to undermine the flow of information (intelligence) received from members of the public into the Police Service if individuals providing intelligence cease to do so due to release of information under FOI related to the intelligence/actions taken as a result of the intelligence they have provided.

Finally, in order to ensure the police deliver effective law enforcement we liaise with various other law enforcement partners. By confirming or denying that any other information is held in respect of covert ongoing investigations, not only would police investigations be compromised but any partnership working with other agencies which may be in place would also be compromised.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure under Section 31(3)

Disclosure would provide transparency in the way police deal with Child Sexual Exploitation offences, and may improve public debate into the tactics deployed by police in fighting crime. It would also serve to demonstrate that the police are open and accountable for their actions.

Factors favouring non-disclosure under Section 31(3)

The police have a duty of care to the community at large and public safety is of paramount importance. If an FOI disclosure revealed information to the world (by citing an exemption or stating no information held) that would undermine an investigation, including covert investigations this could be used to offenders' advantage and would compromise potential victims and public safety generally. It may also encourage offenders to alter their behaviours resulting in further, undetected crime. The risk to public safety cannot be ignored and the police have a responsibility to ensure safety of individuals is protected at all times.

Factors favouring confirming or denying information is held – Section 30(3)

By confirming or denying that any other information relevant to your question exists would satisfy the public that the police take their responsibility to investigate Child Sexual Exploitation thoroughly and that public money is well spent.

Factors favouring not confirming or denying information is held – Section 30(3)

By confirming or denying that any other information relevant to this question exists would hinder the protection of any operations the force has under the guise of covert activity that the force would not want to be known by criminals. This information would be sensitive and the force would not want them to adapt their offending behaviour in order to avoid detection.

Balance test

The factors above highlight the merits of confirming, or denying, whether any other information pertinent to this request exists. The Police Service is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. As part of that policing purpose, various types of investigations may or may not be ongoing. The Police Service will never divulge whether any other information pertinent to a request does or does not exist, if to do so would compromise an ongoing investigation, or undermine the policing purpose in the effective delivery of operational law enforcement. Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of policing operations and investigations it will be overridden in exceptional circumstances. Therefore, at this moment in time the balance test for neither confirming nor denying that any other information is held is appropriate.

No inference can be taken from this refusal that further information does or does not exist.

Please be advised that all Freedom of Information request responses are published on the Staffordshire Police website although personal details are not included.



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

Advice and assistance

Section 16 of the Act places an obligation upon the Authority to provide advice and assistance, in order to comply with this obligation please see below.

Staffordshire Police do not hold conviction data. We would advise that you approach the Government HM Courts & Tribunals service website.

Please find below links to previously disclosed HMCTS data and details upon how to submit a further Freedom of Information request to the Government HM Courts and Tribunals Service for this information.

Make an FOI request - [how to make a request](#).

Check [our previous releases](#) to see if we've already answered your question - [our previous releases](#)

Make a new request by using the details below.

FOI requests

Disclosure Team

Postal Point 10.38, Floor 10

102 Petty France

London

SW1H 9AJ

United Kingdom

Email

data.access@justice.gov.uk

Freedom of Information Request Appeals Procedure

1. Who Can Ask for a Review

Any person who has requested information from Staffordshire Police, which has been dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act, is entitled to complain and request an internal review, if they are dissatisfied with the response they received.

2. How to Request a Review

Requests for review of a Freedom of Information request must be made in writing within two months of the date of receipt of this email, and should be addressed to:

foi@staffordshire.police.uk

Or by Post to:

Central Disclosure Unit

Staffordshire Police HQ

PO Box 3167

Stafford

ST16 9JZ

The reference number, date of the request and details of why the review is being requested must be included. Requests for review should be brought to the attention of the Central Disclosure Unit within two months of the Force's response to the original FOI request.

3. Review Procedure

Receipt of a request for review will be acknowledged in writing. The review will be conducted by another Decision Maker who is independent from the original Decision Maker. The Central Disclosure Unit will set a target date for a response. The response will be made as soon as is practicable with the intention to complete the review within 20 working days. In more complex cases the review may take up to 40 working days.

The independent Decision Maker will conduct a review of the handling of the request for information and of decisions taken, including decisions taken about where the public interest lies in respect of exempt information where applicable. The review enables a re-evaluation of the case, taking into account the matters raised by the complaint.

4. Conclusion of the Appeal

On completion of the review the Independent Decision maker will reply to the complainant with the result of the review. If the complainant is still dissatisfied following the review they should contact the Information Commissioner to make an appeal. The Information Commissioner can be contacted via the following details:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

ICO Website for complaints link: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/foi-and-eir-complaints/foi-and-eir-complaints/>

Freedom of Information
Central Disclosure Unit